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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this conference paper are to point out major research needs in educational administration and to stimulate exploration of methods to resolve those needs. Discussions of apparent problems in educational administration research and suggested responses to these problems are followed by important questions concerning research needs. (LLR)

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RESEARCH NEEDS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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RESEARCH NEEDS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

My main purposes in this presentation are to draw your attention to some major research needs in educational administration, as viewed from a national perspective, and to stimulate your exploration of ways in which we may all contribute to resolving these needs. In pursuing these purposes I shall consider, first, some apparent problems in educational administration research and, secondly, some suggested responses to these problems. I shall conclude by posing some questions that might serve as discussion starters for us. What I shall say is based upon the assumption that you are here because you are concerned with upgrading research in educational administration. At Bill Seawell's suggestion, I am addressing my remarks primarily to professors of educational administration. However, if there are students present, I would hope that what I shall say will interest them as well, and I would certainly encourage them to participate actively in the discussion which will follow this presentation.

There is often some confusion in the use of such terms as basic research, applied research, development, dissemination, diffusion, and demonstration, so let me offer the definitions I apply to these terms and indicate where my emphasis will be in this presentation. I shall use the definitions employed by Hank Gideonse, of the U.S. Office of Education:[1]

(1) The objective of <u>research</u> is to discover, reinforce, or refine knowledge. <u>Basic research</u> is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake or to better understand selected phenomena; <u>applied research</u> is the pursuit of knowledge to meet an identified need or to achieve a specific practical goal.

(2) The objective of development is to produce materials, techniques, processes, hardware, and organizational formats for instruction. It follows and is based upon research, drawing upon existing knowledge to achieve known outcomes (whereas the outcomes of research may be suspected or hypothesized but are not known).

(3) The objective of dissemination is to make information about research and development available in usable and effective form. Demonstration is one form of dissemination, and dissemination is one aspect of the total diffusion process.

My emphasis in this presentation will be upon research (and particularly basic research), although I recognize that a discussion of research is incomplete if it ignores the topic of research utilization, and I do not intend to totally ignore that topic.

Some Apparent Problems

Let us turn now to a consideration of some of the apparent problems in educational administration research. A few weeks ago one of the men responsible for determining the Division A program for the 1971 AERA annual meeting informed me that the quality of proposals for papers and symposia to be included in the program was, in general, atrocious. How can we account for this typically low quality of research in educational administration? There are obviously many problems that contribute to this condition, and I shall discuss only a few of them--specifically, problems of substance, approach, institutions, training and utilization.

Problems of Substance

With regard to substance, Griffiths noted in 1959 that educational administration research is based upon a naked empiricism and lacks a needed theoretical orientation.[2]

Six years later, he was able to observe that, while the amount of theory-based research is still small, there is more than there was in 1959, and he concluded that "educational administration is moving in the direction of research that is more theory-based than that of the past."[3] There is little question that the past fifteen years have seen a considerable growth in the use of concepts and modes of inquiry from the social sciences in educational administration research. In 1968, Haller reported a citation analysis of research articles published in the Educational Administration Quarterly in which he found that:

> At least by the citation criterion, it appears that education [with 32.4% of all] citations has been the most influential discipline on the men who have written for EAQ. . . . Among the social sciences, sociology clearly dominates, having 32% of all citations and 49% of all social science citations. Much further behind were psychology and social psychology, which together garnered 13% of all references and 19% of all citations to the supporting disciplines. . . . Finally, political science, economics, and anthropology, in that order, trailed well behind the others in frequency of citation.[4]

It is apparent that the use of concepts and modes of inquiry from the social sciences in educational administration research has been uneven in terms of the disciplines employed, with sociology receiving a disproportionate amount of attention.

There are other problems inherent in the "social science-theory movement" in educational administration research. The movement has led, for example, to an overemphasis on examining problems of an "is," or factual nature--as opposed to problems of an "ought," or value nature. Yet school administrators cannot be neutral or value-free. Their policy decisions must be based upon an understanding of such value-laden questions as those related to race, deprivation, teacher militancy, student unrest, federal-state-local competition, and relations with other agencies (both public and non-public). Moreover, even within this "is" perspective, the application of theory to research on actual school situations has been too limited. We have tended largely to follow a deductive approach in which we start with theories and hypotheses and collect

just enough real data to test them, rather than seeking inductively to describe reality in an anthropological fashion and then look to theories for assistance in explaining that reality. So it would seem that we are guilty of having unevenly used social science theory in educational administration research, with the result that the "theory movement" has not yet had the impact upon educational policy and administrative behavior that it is capable of.

Another substantive problem in educational administration research stems from the fact that those doing it tend to work too much in isolation from one another. For example, sociologically-oriented and politically-oriented researchers typically conduct their studies independently and pay little attention to the results of each other's work. Yet, we are all aware that numerous sociological and political variables in educational administration are inter-related. Similarly, researchers in educational administration tend largely to ignore the work of researchers in other educational specialties, such as psychology, curriculum, and history. This kind of separatism ignores the multi-faceted reality with which the school administrator must deal. Moreover, it may lead us eventually to the kinds of environmental problems that ecologists are currently calling our attention to. Just as various kinds of environmental pollution have resulted from a lack of communication and cooperation between scientists in different disciplines, so too may we be dangerously misled if we continue to permit those seeking the improvement of educational leadership to pursue their studies from different perspectives while ignoring the results of one another's research.

Problems of Approach

This leads us to a consideration of problems inherent in our approaches to research in educational administration. Related to the point I just made is the problematic fact that educational administration research tends to be a largely individual endeavor. With the obvious current exceptions of such inter-institutional efforts as the National

Educational Finance Project and the Danforth Studies, our researchers generally work alone. Yet, the major problems in educational administration are complex and extensive. The solution of any one of them is beyond the capability of any single researcher; nor is it possible through applying the perspective of any single discipline. Until educational administration researchers substitute the spirit of cooperation for the spirit of competition and jealousy that currently pervades their work, the problems of administering our schools will remain unsolved--at least through research.

A second problem with our approach to educational administration research inheres in the current diffusion of responsibility and lack of overall coordination that characterize our research efforts. The sponsors of educational research are numerous and varied, and so are the kinds of institutions that perform the research. In addition, as Gideonse has observed, "the financial resources available for educational research and development are woefully inadequate."[5] An evaluation of federal research programs recently concluded by Mitch Brickell led him to the following observations:

> 1. The education profession is almost entirely dependent upon the U.S. Office of Education for the support of research and development, except for the limited accomplishments possible through doctoral research....
> 2. The amount of money devoted to the effort is far too small for the changes being demanded of the schools....
> 3. The Bureau [of Research] had no administrative device for directing funds into areas of critical educational needs....
> 4. The work of the previous fifteen years tended to be non-cumulative, except within the careers of individual researchers and within the programs of individual R&D Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories....
> 5. Fifteen years of unsolicited, field-initiated research and development had not created a strong, vocal constituency for educational research and development....[6]

Thus, our present approach to research in educational administration (and in education more generally) is uncoordinated, diffused, and lacking in direction. What this means, of course, is that we are far from realizing the potential that exists among the various individuals and agencies involved in research to contribute significantly

to the resolution of the critical problems we currently face in educational administration.

Problems of Institutions

Narrowing our scope now to the role of the single institution, we can observe that there are problems within universities that constrain research. One relates to the rather common practice of combining research and service units within schools of education. On the basis of their monumental study a few years ago, Sieber and Lazarsfeld point out that "in spite of the claims of some directors of service and research units that field service work actually contributes to research capabilities, indirect evidence of the research climate of these units suggests that this has not been the case."[7] They recommend that the two functions be separated as fully as possible on any given campus. They also identify some less structurally—oriented characteristics that lead to problems in educational administration research when viewed in terms of the desirability of involving social scientists in such research:

> Unfortunately, the calcified structure of the universities, the concern of professional educators with maintaining a monopoly on educational resources and policies, and the low prestige of schools of education have hampered the development of collaborative arrangements. As a consequence, contacts are informal and sporadic; the bulk of research on education is today conducted by arts and science scholars who have virtually no familiarity with professional education; and the better students prefer academic fields over educational departments.[8]

An even less tangible problem in institutions is their typical lack of a climate which values empirical scholarship. In fact, Campbell has gone so far as to say that if educational administration research is to thrive in a university, "appointments, promotions, salaries, professorial loads, and related practices should reveal, even more than pious affirmations, that research is the major goal of the institution, its graduate school of education, and its division of educational administration."[9] I suspect that the number of institutions in the country today meeting these criteria could be counted

on the fingers of one hand.

Problems of Training

Another intrainstitutional constraint to effective educational administration research derives from problems of training. These problems are significant for two reasons: (1) because the majority of research in educational administration is conducted by graduate students[10]; and (2) because it is in this setting that those who will become educational administration researchers presumably develop the abilities to do so. As Sieber and Lazarsfeld have noted, "the range of opportunities for research training in education is extremely narrow."[11] Some attempts were made to overcome these deficiencies in the late sixties by the U.S. Office of Education which supported six types of programs for training educational researchers: (1) undergraduate training programs to recruit capable career researchers; (2) graduate training programs, awarded through graduate schools, to increase the flow of competent research personnel; (3) postdoctoral grants to help update the skills of educational researchers and to acquaint trained researchers in other fields with research in education; (4) institutes which provided short-term intensive training in particular aspects of research; (5) special projects, including seminars, workshops, personnel exchanges, in-service training programs, and other non-degree training; and (6) program development grants to strengthen college and university staffs and to develop curricula or training in educational research.[12] Gideonse concluded that these programs were insufficient to meet the need at the time and, since then, federal funds for research training have been cut back and priorities reconsidered. A consequence has been an increased emphasis on the training of development, diffusion, and evaluation personnel in education and a corresponding decreased emphasis on the training of educational researchers.

With regard to problems in the nature of research training currently offered in universities,

the needed changes most frequently identified by a group of university personnel and recent doctoral graduates responding to a UCEA survey included the following: (1) increased relevance or problem-orientation of topic; (2) more coordination and integration among studies; (3) increased training in research design and methodology; (4) more individualized flexibility for students in choosing their research topics and methodologies; (5) increased sophistication of research (referring to theoretical bases, rigorous methodologies, and computer-programmed analyses); and (6) more time, attention, interest, and competence on the part of professors guiding the students' research.[13] Another problem in research training turned up by the same study resulted from a lack of opportunity to participate in research activities other than, and prior to, conducting the doctoral dissertation. By and large, then, it cannot be concluded that we are doing an adequate job of preparing educational administration researchers.

Problems of Utilization

Finally, even if we were preparing productive researchers, problems exist which prevent the proper utilization of research output. The difficulty of translating new knowledge into new structures and behaviors has been examined by numerous scholars and practitioners. Nevertheless, the problem is still very much with us. We have not even begun to develop adequate mechanisms for synthesizing and packaging research results in order to effectively communicate them to those who should utilize them. And even if we had, we would still have the problem of encouraging practitioners to "keep up" with research results--not to mention the problem of helping them transform these research results into forms and actions that will advance the educative process.

It should be noted, however, that the federal government is cognizant of these problems in research utilization, as is obvious from the establishment of regional educational laboratories, research and development centers, Title III centers, and the recently

increased priority accorded to development and diffusion of new ideas and practices.

Some Suggested Responses

On this more optimistic note, let us turn now to some suggested responses to the apparent problems in educational administration research that I have been discussing. We shall look first at some desirable research targets and then we shall consider some recommended facilitative strategies.

Research Targets

With regard to research targets, Mitch Brickell recently developed rather detailed plans for a directed research program in school organization and administration to be sponsored by the Office of Education's National Center for Educational Research and Development. While these plans are now functionally dead because of a change in the administration of the U. S. Office, they will serve our present purposes well in that they identify from a national perspective the problem areas in most critical need of research in our field. The directed research program was addressed to some of the problems of approach that we noted earlier in that it was intended to "concentrate funds in a few areas of high educational significance, limit spending to a few soluble problems, manage the program so that the results will be cumulative and can be employed relatively soon to improve the schools, and attempt to build wide recognition of the power of properly-supported research and development to change the schools."[14] The proposed directed research program was expected to be absorbed into the projected new National Institute for Education.

Under this program, about 85% of NCERD's resources which were not earmarked for such purposes as National Assessment were to go into directed research in four selected areas--reading, early childhood, vocational education, and school organization and

administration. Within the latter area ten objectives were selected, based on the following six criteria: (1) available knowledge, (2) available talent, (3) significance, (4) impact on schools, (5) cost/benefit relationship, and (6) public acceptability. The ten objectives in the area of school organization and administration, which were viewed as constituting an inter-connected cluster, were as follows:[15]

(1) to take a deep reading of what a sample of the American people in a few major cities and surrounding areas expect of elementary and secondary education;

(2) to identify, analyze, and publicize several dramatic alternatives to traditional school organization which could make schools not only more effective for the present but also more responsive to new public expectations as they arise;

(3) to develop and test new divisions of labor for schools, generating several patterns for organizing the work of professionals, para-professionals, and non-professionals;

(4) to develop management information systems using data processing equipment to collect, store, cumulate, and present the kind of continuous information flows needed to guide administrative decisions in schools which keep on changing;

(5) to develop and test models of the process which should occur in educational planning, models which are capable of handling the complexity of that process but which are simple enough to suggest general designs for planning systems which might be used in the real world of ordinary school administrators;

(6) to develop and test models of educational decision-making, which begins with planning but goes far beyond it;

(7) to develop and test procedures schools can use to make innovation a normal, orderly, and successful part of their operation;

(8) to devise and demonstrate new patterns of state-local relations which will bring state authority and state leadership into play to make local districts over into the kind of rational, self-renewing accountable institutions envisioned here;

(9) to develop alternative patterns which could be used to connect agencies such as universities, Research and Development Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories which produce knowledge and invent practice to agencies such as state education departments, intermediate units, and local schools which use knowledge

and practice; and

(10) to develop and test new materials and new methods for training school administrators to be client-concerned, output-oriented, assessment-minded, and accountability-conscious.

To be even more specific, and more random, I am sure we can all identify particular questions which in our own opinions are badly in need of research at the moment. For example: (1) Why are some educational pressure groups effective and others not in engendering support for school programs? (2) Under what kind of demand conditions is a school referendum accepted or rejected, and what role do forces outside the community play in generating local demands? (3) What are the implications for learning and for the organizational dynamics of schools of current pressures for accountability, of increasing interaction between business and education, of introducing paraprofessionals into education, and of the work being done by futurists? I am sure that each of you could generate a list at least as long and significant as mine.

Let me identify one other target area which I think is badly in need of research. I am referring to the preparation of educational administrators. The training process is basic to the daily activities of almost all of us. Yet we know precious little about what we are doing or how well we are doing it. We badly need answers soon to questions such as the following: (1) What are the early indications of an individual's potential for educational leadership? (2) What kinds of behaviors and characteristics typify the "effective" educational leader? (3) What leadership behaviors and characteristics can be trained for, and what ones must be recruited for? (4) What selection mechanisms can validly predict eventual administrative performance? (5) What are the relationships between various aspects of an administrator preparation program and eventual administrative performance? (6) How do various preparatory components compare with one another in terms of costs and benefits? And there are many other important questions about administrator training that require research. Regrettably, only a few scholars

are currently at work seeking answers to these questions. Among these few are a pair of professors at New York University who are investigating the "institutional culture" of preparatory programs, and a team of scholars at Florida State University who are designing a computer-based information system intended to help researchers examine the supply of and demand for specialists in the field, the major trends in selection and training of prospective administrators, and the talent flow and career patterns of those employed in leadership positions in education. These efforts, however, are only a beginning and much more research is needed if we are to justify our existence as university-based gate keepers.

Facilitative Strategies

The subject of training leads us to a consideration of strategies to facilitate responses to the research needs in educational administration that have been identified. Clearly, strategies to facilitate the training of researchers are crucial. One such strategy involves the development of continuing education experiences for professors both to advance their own research work and to improve the ways in which they train prospective researchers in educational administration. Special post-doctoral opportunities involving both professors of educational administration and social scientists are necessary to upgrade the research skills of the former and socialize them to the research role, and to stimulate research by social scientists in the area of educational administration.

Another needed training strategy is the development of regional graduate student organizations which would stimulate and facilitate communication and cooperation among students from different universities who are conducting or planning to conduct research. Such regional organizations could encourage and coordinate inter-institutional team research by graduate students and could present periodic seminars at which national or regional experts might advise students on problem areas that need research in

educational administration and on research designs and methodology.

A third significant training strategy involves the development of differentiated preparatory programs for prospective researchers in educational administration. Culbertson has demonstrated that the roles of researcher, developer, and administrator differ significantly in accordance with such variables as their general aspirations, their desired outcomes, their immediate knowledge-related resources, their essential processes, their typical work locations, their tangible and immediate artifacts, their significant quality control agents, and numerous other aspects.[16] In the light of these role differences, it seems logical to suggest that one might look to different recruitment pools for prospective researchers than for developers or administrators, that different selection mechanisms would be employed, that the content of their training programs would differ, that field experiences would be located in different settings, and that the culminating activities of their training program would be quite different. Yet, the majority of universities continue to try and prepare students for virtually any role in educational administration through a common training program.

Ways must be found to design and to test preparatory programs for educational administration researchers that focus directly upon the research role and that differ substantially from programs to prepare other specialists in educational administration. While some large universities may be able to develop differentiated programs for preparing several specialists, many institutions are capable of doing a truly effective job in preparing only one kind of specialist. For this reason, cooperation among institutions within a given region should be encouraged so that some of them may focus upon the preparation of researchers while others emphasize the training of developers or administrators. In such an endeavor, inter-institutional jealousies will loom large; however, this battle must be fought and won if we are to train really good educational administration researchers.

Finally, some new strategies are needed to facilitate the utilization of research output. As I noted earlier, some progress in this arena has been stimulated by the federal government's increased emphasis upon development and dissemination in recent years. We have only begun to scratch the surface, however. While the bulk of research in educational administration is contained in doctoral dissertations, the retrieval of information on these studies is difficult. Anyone who has used Dissertation Abstracts will attest to this fact. A current attempt to improve this condition is represented in a project being conducted by a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education who is developing a computer-based system for identifying doctoral dissertations in educational administration on the basis of key words in context within their titles rather than simply on the basis of broad subject categories. Another utilization strategy that has been underemployed is the development of syntheses of research, bibliographies, and state-of-the-knowledge papers in specific subject areas. Also, educational administration lags far behind medicine and other professions in the employment of media such as audio cassettes and FM radio transmissions to convey quickly and efficiently the results of recent research to educational administration practitioners. Again, inter-institutional cooperation among univiersities within a given region could greatly enhance strategies such as these to facilitate the utilization of research in educational administration.

Conclusion

I think I have said enough now to start a discussion on research needs in educational administration. We have looked at some apparent problems of substance, approach, institutions, training, and the utilization of research. And we have considered some suggested responses in terms of both research targets and facilitative strategies. Because what we in universities are able to do in striving to meet the research needs in

educational administration will depend largely upon the support patterns of the United States Office of Education, let me conclude by reemphasizing what I perceive as the four major thrusts emerging in Washington: (1) a trend toward directed research--that is, solicited research on selected priority problems; (2) a trend toward programmatic and team research--involving cooperative efforts of several researchers representing a variety of disciplines and organizations; (3) a trend toward decision-oriented or applied research intended to help solve actual problems confronting practitioners; and (4) a trend toward increased emphasis on development and dissemination intended to help promote knowledge utilization (probably, at least immediately, at the expense of knowledge production).

Now I'm willing to discuss anything you like in connection with either what I have said or what I haven't said. However, I think that in the time that remains we ought, at least to devote some attention to the following three questions: (1) What can you as individual professors (or students) do to help meet research needs in educational administration? (2) What can your universities as single institutions do to help meet research needs in educational administration? (3) What can SRCEA as a regional association do to help meet research needs in educational administration? Those are some openers for you.

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